

As Americans, we are writing to protest Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry piece deceptively described as a "documentary," just days before the upcoming Presidential election.

As Democrats, we are likely to disagree with the content of the piece, but we want to make it clear that our objection to Sinclair's present action is based not on partisanship but on principle: For Sinclair or any other media giant to broadcast what is actually an extended piece of negative campaign advertising in the guise of "journalism" is misrepresentation of the worst kind, and we believe that it is dangerous to our democracy.

This incident is yet another clear and highly disturbing example of the dangers of media consolidation, about which we have deep and longstanding concerns, and about which we have written to the FCC in the past.

The airwaves belong to the American people. Sinclair uses them free of

charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies like Sinclair control the airwaves, the potential for abuse is great, as we see in the present instance:

Sinclair's allegiance to the Republican party is well known, but as we noted above, the problem here is not just their partisanship, but their misuse of the public airwaves to broadcast opinion disguised as fact, partisanship disguised as objective reporting.

If Sinclair wants to broadcast this piece, it should be required to label it honestly as what it is -- a campaign ad -- and provide equal time to the opposing view.

In our view, Sinclair's actions this week clearly illustrate why the FCC should strengthen media ownership rules rather than weakening them, and illustrate exactly why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a rubber stamp on a returned postcard.

Very respectfully,